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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 291.—Vol. XI. FOR WEEK ENDING JULY 28, 1894. [Price One Penny.

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SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 291.—Vol. XI. *FOR THE WEEK ENDING JULY 28, 1894.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

THE PORTRAIT OF LADY BEATRICE.

I REMEMBER perfectly how it happened. I received an invitation from my old friend and fellow-artist, Stanley Harcourt, to spend a week with him at Harcourt Park. It was early in the season, and only a few other guests were invited. Although my friendship with Stanley dated back to days at Eton, I had never visited the Park, and I accepted with alacrity.

Before starting I slipped into my pocket my latest purchase at "the old curiosity shop"—a bracelet of twisted gold, with a miniature on it, surrounded by diamonds. This out-of-the-way corner in London, called by Stanley "the den," and which I had christened "the curiosity shop," attracted us frequently. Here we bought a good deal of our studio paraphernalia—effective drapery, swords, and old armour.

The bracelet, I felt convinced, had a history, although Mr. Isaac, proprietor of the shop, could give me no information concerning it. He had purchased it a few months before at the bankrupt sale of L——, the celebrated jeweller. The gold, Mr. Isaac remarked, was good, but the brilliants were off colour, and the miniature of doubtful execution. I did not agree with him on the last point, for I admired the portrait extremely. It represented a man of about eight-and-twenty, with a sad, pensive face.

From the dress—high rolling collar and stock—I concluded that it had been painted some time in the fifties. It attracted me strangely from the first, nor was I content until I had become the owner of it. The sum paid was, no doubt, but a fraction of its real value; for although Mr. Isaac was a Jew, he would often let us have things for a mere song. Perhaps he was not wholly disinterested in these transactions, knowing well that we could speak a good word for him. Indeed, we gave the little shop quite a boom, and one particular style of candlestick became so popular that it was known as "the Isaac."

I considered the bracelet a treasure, and I anticipated surprising Stanley with my good fortune, at the same time making him quite green with envy.

Arriving at my destination, I found a cordial welcome. Stanley made an ideal host, while Lady Harcourt, his mother, did the honours most gracefully His sister Edith I had not seen for years and I found her a charming girl—tall and superbly proportioned, with reddish brown hair and that wild rose complexion which seems to belong exclusively to English maids.

As for Harcourt Park, it was fascinating.

The house was of grey stone, a rambling structure which had been remodelled, until hardly a trace of its original design remained. The older parts—the tower and outer staircase—were almost in ruins, and were covered with ivy.

"You are to choose your room, old fellow," said Stanley, as we were exploring the grounds. "What will you have? Tower, time of Queen Bess; east wing, Charles II.; west wing, Queen Anne; northern projection, George I.; southern projection, George III.; and the rest, grand medley, principally Victoria in the thirty-fifth year of her reign, You see you can choose any period of history and your favourite sovereign, but if you have an eye to comfort, I should recommend Victoria."

"Isn't there a haunted chamber?" I asked. "Such a mixture ought to develop something of the sort, and I am particularly fond of ghosts. Wait a minute," I continued, not heeding my companion, "I see just what I want. Look! the three windows up there. No! higher up—to the right, with the stone ledges and blue hangings.

My friend's face fell.

"Really, Hal, I am afraid it's impossible. It hasn't been occupied for years. In fact, when the whole house was put in repair, that room and the one next to it were left out. My mother had a little sentiment about them, for they belonged to my father's favourite brother; he is dead, you know. Still, if you don't mind being rather uncomfortable, it might be managed."

"It was merely a whim," I answered. "I was thinking what a glorious view you must get from the last window; but of course I shall be delighted with any other. Pray don't give it a thought."

"I have no earthly objection," Stanley continued, "and I doubt if my mother has. Your traps have been carried up to the room next mine, but Wilson shall move them."

When Lady Harcourt was asked, she graciously consented, but I noticed that she seemed absent-minded all that evening, and I feared that I had stirred up unpleasant memories.

When the room was shown me, I could hardly suppress an exclamation of surprise and delight.

"You admire, it, I see," said Stanley. "Nearly everybody does."

"Admire!" I answered. "Admire is a poor word. It is superb."

The walls were hung with gobelin-blue tapestry. The woodwork was ivory-white, and the ceiling was beautifully carved in arabesques of gold. Above the hangings, in the wide, carved frieze, were medallion portraits of the court of Louis XIV.

The furniture was very beautiful, and in perfect harmony with the decorations. There were luxurious divans, such as Madame de Maintenon might have reclined upon, exquisite tables of inlaid wood, and dainty chairs of blue and gold.

One article, a writing table, heavily inlaid, was apparently all ready for use, with a bewitching array of materials—trays and candlesticks of Dresden china, wax of palest colours, and a little pile of tapers.

The bed was a massive structure, with a canopy of old blue brocade.

"And you would never have shown me this, if I had not insisted on taking possession?"

"We often show the room, but it is seldom occupied—I might say never."

"But it is in such perfect condition!"

Stanley smiled a little sadly. "My mother's orders!"

"This room has a history, I know. How came it to be furnished so beautifully, and in such a different way

My friendship dated back to days at Eton.

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I sat up in bed wide awake.

from the rest of the house? On the whole, I think I prefer the old oak and rugs, but for one room it is superb," and I found myself repeating the only adjective that seemed fitting.

"Yes, it has a history. My father's brother had it fitted up for his bride. It was the reigning fashion then—early in the fifties. He died shortly after his marriage, and the room has never been occupied, save once or twice; but it is a long story. I will tell you later, say to-morrow, when we have more time."

The evening passed off agreeably, and it was late when we retired.

"Happy dreams, Hal," said Stanley, as he left me at the door.

By the light of the candles, the room was more beautiful than ever. The faces from the frieze seemed to look down upon me. There were Madame Maintenon, cold and cynical; La Valliere, mild and gentle; fascinating Madame de Rambouillet; and Julie d'Argennes, fairest of all.

What was the mystery connected with the room? What secret did these patched and powdered ladies guard? I found that I could not drive the subject from my mind, and after I had gone to bed, and lay looking up at the ceiling, the gold tracery dimly visible in the moonlight, I still wondered what it could be.

I do not know how long I had slept, when I was awakened most suddenly. There was no noise—not a sound pervaded the room—and yet I sat up in bed wide awake. The silence seemed oppressive, almost suffocating. I scanned the room to see if everything was the same as when I went to bed. Yes, the position of each chair and table was identical. I looked up at the faces. They were one confused mass. Then I followed the tapestry hangings with my eyes, beginning at the left and looking into every fold. As I neared the right, my attention was riveted on what seemed to be a full-length portrait of a young and beautiful girl. How, in my close examination of the room, I had failed to notice it, seemed to me inexplicable.

The light that streamed in from an adjacent window showed every line. The face was pale, with dark, luminous eyes, while the hair, equally dark, was parted and puffed slightly at the sides. As nearly as I could make out it was the fashion of thirty or forty years back. The gown was white, soft and clinging, with short waist and loose sleeves. The frame seemed lost in darkness, but the face and figure were wonderfully clear.

I now felt certain that the picture was not there when I entered the room, and yet, how was its existence to be accounted for?

Could the wind have drawn back the tapestry, thus revealing some old family portrait? And who was this charming girl?

I now noticed points which had escaped me at first—the exquisite moulding of the arms and hands, the jewelled dagger in the coils of dark hair, which even in paint seemed to change and flash, and the background, which appeared to be copied from the very tapestry of the room. The face fascinated me. The eyes, so dark and magnetic, seemed to burn beneath their arched brows, and as I gazed they drooped, almost closed, then dilated.

Good heavens, this could be no portrait! *The arms were moving!*

The hands clasped and then fluttered to the sides; then slowly went up to the head, and took the dagger from the black coils of hair.

Surely this was no painted canvas. I tried to rise, to reach for the bell, but I seemed bound hand and foot. Every trace of energy had left me. It was as if my own life and activity had been transferred to the figure before me, leaving me lifeless as clay. As I looked, the girl bent her head over the dagger, and when she raised it I shuddered. The face was beautiful still, but every bit of feeling was gone, leaving it cold, sinister, cruel.

Then she raised her arms high above her head, and the lips moved. No sound came, but I felt that in that moment she had made a vow. The lips parted as if in laughter. All was silent, but it was so hard and cruel. Then all grew confused. The face and figure seemed to melt away. I closed my eyes for a moment, and when I looked again, the background of the picture seemed the same, but here the resemblance ceased.

On a low divan reclined a man, of perhaps nine-and-twenty. His eyes were closed; his face was very pale; but it was not the pallor of death. His dress corresponded in period with that of the girl's gown, although he looked ten years her senior.

The face was very familiar. Somewhere—and I racked my brain in vain to remember where—I had seen that face. Every line I knew. How long the man reclined thus I cannot tell. It seemed hours. It was, in all probability, a few moments, perhaps only seconds. A door seemed to open somewhere in the rear, and the girl entered. She bent over the man and listened; then softly knelt at his side. When she rose, the jewelled dagger slipped to the floor, Her hands trembled now, but the face remained unchanged.

Once more all grew indistinct, and when I could distinguish form and colour I seemed to be looking into a room, panelled with oak, from floor to ceiling. Before one panel stood the girl. Her hands moved uncertainly over it, and then chose the next one. It opened, as if by magic, disclosing a space about a foot square. Into this she dropped the dagger. For the third time the colours mingled, and again I was looking at the motionless figure on the divan.

His face seemed like alabaster in contrast with his dark hair. One hand, delicate as a woman's, hung at his side. Suddenly it flashed across me that the face before me was identical with the miniature on the bracelet. Yes, every feature was the same. The high rolling collar and stock which he wore completed the resemblance. Had it been in my power to sink back on my pillow, I certainly should have done so at this discovery, but as movement of any kind on my part was impossible, I could only gasp.

Near the divan stood the girl. Her arms hung motionless at her sides. She was almost as pale as he, save her lips, which were scarlet. Her beauty repelled and yet fascinated me. Never had I beheld such a face. She shivered slightly, and slowly, very slowly, sank down at his side. Her hair became unfastened and fell over her like a veil. For an instant I closed my eyes. The horror of it was overpowering. When I opened them she lay as if lifeless, and her hair, no longer black, gleamed in the moonlight like driven snow.

A moment later there was only the tapestry stirring in the wind.

Then I lost consciousness, and when I came to my senses the sun was high in the heavens. Before descending the stairs I took the bracelet from the case, for a close examination.

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There was no room for mistake: the face and that which I had seen in the night were one and the same.

To come down from that chamber to the cosy breakfast-room seemed like stepping from one world into another. It may have been imagination, but I fancied that all regarded me rather curiously.

Lady Harcourt was the first to break the silence. "You rested well, I trust?" she said quietly, but, as I thought, with veiled interest.

I answered in the affirmative.

"And had pleasant dreams, Hal?" inquired Stanley.

"I don't think I dreamed at all," I replied, and the subject was dropped.

Immediately after breakfast, I found opportunity to remind my host of his promise in regard to the room. It is needless to say that I was now doubly anxious to know its history.

An hour later, we were seated alone in the small library acknowledged by all to be Stanley's special property.

"It is a long story," he said, "and I hardly know where to begin, but perhaps it would be as well to get to the point at once. First, let me say that it is only my great friendship for you, Halstone, that leads me to speak of this. It is something we seldom mention.

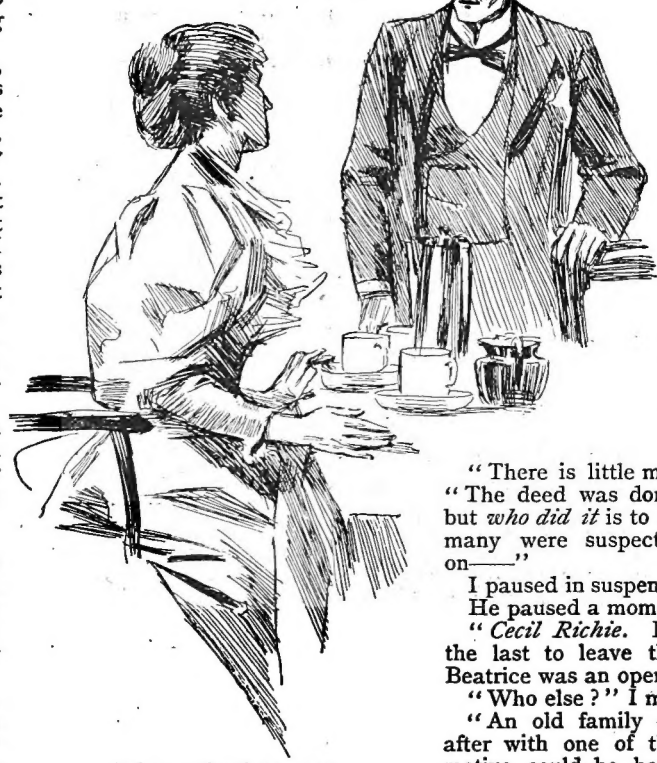
"My uncle, Lord Stanley, after whom I am named, was my father's eldest brother. He married a Miss Hartwell, Beatrice Hartwell, the only child of old Harold Hartwell. She was very beautiful, but absolutely without heart. At least, so I am told; of course I know nothing of her, for this was over thirty years ago. But her beauty is almost a tradition. There is a miniature of her, which I will show you later, and you can judge for yourself.

"Before her marriage with Lord Stanley, she had been engaged to Cecil Richie, her cousin. You know of the Richies?"

I nodded.

"It was broken off, and she married my uncle. He was a better match, of course; but now, when I think of it all, I believe she always cared for Richie.

"Well, my uncle had the west rooms fitted up, and she came here a bride. I will show you the second one later. You will like to see it, I expect. It is panelled entirely in oak—rather interesting in its way."



"You rested well, I trust?"

The book I was toying with fell to the floor.

"It was only a short time after the wedding that a very strange thing happened."

He stopped short and glanced quickly round the room.

"Edith knows nothing of this," he said. Then, dropping his voice, he continued:

"It was in September—the eleventh, I think."

"Last night," I said softly.

Stanley did not hear me.

"A large party was given, and half the county was here; among others, Cecil Richie. I remember my old nurse telling me how beautiful Lady Beatrice looked in her white gown and jewels. She had magnificent jewels, by the way. That evening, at dinner, a strange thing happened, and my old nurse used to say it was an omen of what followed.

"Beatrice wore a pair of bracelets—Stanley's bridal gift. They were of twisted gold, each with a miniature surrounded by diamonds. One represented Lord Stanley; the other her ladyship. It was a quaint fancy, carried out by a famous French artist."

I sank back in my chair.

"Why, good heavens, Hal, how pale you are! Why, what is the matter, man?"

"Nothing," I answered, "go on! Your tale interests me strangely."

"After dinner, as the ladies were leaving the dining-room, Lady Beatrice drew back the portières for them to pass out.

"As she did so, one of the bracelets caught in the meshes of the curtain, and although of excellent workmanship, or apparently so, when it was disentangled it was in pieces. It seemed a trifle at the time, but superstitious people remembered it."

"Was it the bracelet containing her portrait?" I asked.

"No, it was his."

Stanley rose from the chair and paced the room, looking at me in some anxiety.

"Odd how the mere relating of something you know only by hearsay stirs you up."

He seated himself and continued:

"The guests were late in taking their departure, and it was long after midnight when the family retired. My uncle had gone to his room some what earlier, not feeling particularly well.

"That night," and his voice sank to a whisper, "he was murdered—yes, *murdered* in his own house. Next morning they found him stretched lifeless on one of the blue divans, and Lady Beatrice unconscious at his side."

I leaned back in my chair, while a feeling of deadly faintness came over me. I could hardly breathe.

"There is little more to tell," Stanley continued. "The deed was done; there was no doubt of that, but *who did it* is to this day a mystery. Of course, many were suspected, but suspicion fell chiefly on——"

I paused in suspense.

He paused a moment and then said softly:

"*Cecil Richie.* It was brought out that he was the last to leave the house, and his devotion to Beatrice was an open secret."

"Who else?" I managed to ask.

"An old family servant, who disappeared soon after with one of the maids. But what possible motive could he have had? He was devoted to Lord Stanley and always had been, and was a favourite with the whole household. At this time certain jewels also disappeared. The dagger that Lady Beatrice wore in her hair that very night was never seen again, and the broken bracelet seems to have melted into thin air, too. I regret the loss of the latter extremely, for it was the sole portrait of Lord Stanley, and the marked resemblance he bore to my father would have made it doubly precious. Then the diamonds made it very valuable, for they were of the purest water. The servant, as I said, disappeared, and Cecil Richie, evidently finding English air not quite to his taste, went abroad and to all appearance dropped out of existence."

"Was no one else suspected?"

"My mother," and Stanley again dropped his voice, "had one theory, which differed from that of everybody else, and that was, that Lady Beatrice herself did the deed." He paused for me to take in the full import of the words.

"Poor mother! She never liked Beatrice. There had always been a good deal of girlish rivalry between them, and I sometimes think Richie was at the bottom of that, too."

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"Rather odd," I interrupted, "providing they cared for one man, that they should have afterwards married brothers."

"Yes, the whole affair from beginning to end is strange, and one I should certainly doubt, if I were to hear it from any one else."

"What is your own theory, Stanley? Do you agree with your mother?"

"Do you think I am mad?" he replied. "How could I believe a young girl capable of such a thing? She was heartless; but, good heavens, it takes more than lack of heart to do such a deed! I should suspect Captain Richie far sooner, and yet all his conduct was very straightforward and manly at the time. But as for Lady Beatrice, why, man, it nearly killed her. In that one night her hair turned white as snow. Oh, they say she was 'regal,' and that she was far lovelier than before! People were not at all surprised when five years later she became Countess de Rousillon. Poor Beatrice! misfortunes followed her. It was a very unhappy marriage, and, to crown all, her only child was stolen. Kidnapping seems to have been in vogue twenty years ago; only this child was never recovered. It is small wonder that the Countess died of a broken heart."

Lady Beatrice drew back the portières.

I rose from my seat and went to the window. "Stanley," I said, "who has occupied that room since the affair?"

"Let me think. Two persons, I believe."

"Do you mean to say that I am only the third?"

"Why, yes! What is it! You don't mean you saw or heard anything? The servants call the room haunted, but that is scarcely to be wondered at. Besides, in these enlightened times, ghosts are out of fashion."

"Tell me about the other two," I persisted.

"The others—why, one was my cousin—and it was years ago. He was taken ill that night with a raging fever, and died a few weeks later. But the room had nothing to do with it. The doctors said it had been in his system for weeks. The other was a little scatter-brained French governess. She was put in there, when the house was crowded with guests. She was a queer thing—believed in spiritualism and all that, and I was not surprised to hear of her becoming insane."

"One died," I muttered, "one became insane. I wonder——." At this moment the door opened, and Edith stood on the threshold. She made a charming picture in her simple cotton gown and garden hat.

"May I ask the meaning of this solemn conclave?" she said. "I don't think it's a bit kind of you, Stanley," turning to her brother, "to drag Mr. Craig off to this stuffy room when the tennis court is just suffering to be used."

"I will compel him to release me as soon as possible," I answered gaily, and the door closed.

"I fear I have been rather selfish, Hal."

"Not at all. I haven't had my say yet. First let me ask if you have ever doubted my sanity; that is, you have believed me to be of tolerably sound intellect."

"Generally—yes," laughed Stanley.

"Very well, then, listen to what I am about to say, and never again express your disbelief in ghosts."

I began disconnectedly; but before I had gone very far, my friend was as white and speechless as I could wish.

"Now," said I, "let me see Lady Beatrice's portrait, for that will be the final test, and after that I have something to show you," and I drew out the little box. When Stanley handed me the bracelet, I gave a cry, for the face that looked out from its frame of diamonds was the one I had seen the night before—the same dark eyes, the puffed hair—even the gown was not unlike. The bracelet was of twisted gold, the only difference in the two being that the diamonds in mine were of inferior quality and a suspicion now flashed across me that they were not the original stones.

"Now," said I, "you will see my latest purchase from Isaac," and with considerable pride I opened the box and handed it to Stanley. I have seen surprise depicted on the human countenance, but I never saw, nor have I seen since, quite such an expression as came into my friend's face. After that, our talk was absorbing, and it is needless to say that Edith and tennis were forgotten. Stanley was eager to go to London, find L—— and ferret out the bracelet mystery at once.

Later in the day we examined the panelled room, but no amount of tapping and pressing would reveal the hidden recess.

That night we watched in the white-and-gold room, but the silent guests did not appear. The rest of the week passed off delightfully. Edith and I became excellent friends. When I left Harcourt Park, I carried away two distinct impressions, one of Lady Beatrice and the other of Edith Harcourt.

Stanley and I spent a fruitless week in searching for L—— and when at last we found that worthy, the information which he gave us was anything but satisfactory. He remembered vaguely about the bracelet. It was left to be mended years ago—he thought, by a woman—and was never called for. As for removing the diamonds, he was shocked that one of his high standing should be accused of such a thing. As for the Jew, he had purchased the bracelet at his sale when many such articles went for nothing—positively nothing.

Almost immediately, I began a full-length portrait of Lady Beatrice, as I first beheld her against the tapestry hangings. I had the miniature as a guide, but that was scarcely necessary, for her face haunted me continually. One morning, when the picture was nearly finished, I received the following telegram from Stanley:

"*West wing totally destroyed by fire. I send you something found in the ruins.*"

A box arrived later, and when opened disclosed a dagger of quaint workmanship. It was dim with rust, and the blade was badly damaged, but the jewels were in perfect condition.

The portrait was finished. It won me fame and fortune, and fame and fortune won Lady Harcourt's consent to my marriage with her daughter

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THE MAN MY SISTER MARRIED.

CHAPTER XII.

JUSTINA was in the right mood now to do anything for me, so we went into the house. Yara sat by the table, and after speaking to me, he asked her to play monte.

She sat down at the table with him, and I watched them—their brown evil faces and small bright eyes; straight, black hair; he so gaunt and lean; she so wrinkled and old; they age so young, those women. I thought what a queer girl I was, and what company I kept, and I wondered if there ever was a worse charge to unfortunate relatives than myself.

Justina joked about putting him in a trance. She had evidently mentioned it before to him; finally he agreed, saying she could not. Shading the flickering candle with a book from his face, she went to him and began making passes over his forehead with her fingers, wringing them lightly each time, as if she had dipped them in water.

"He will talk soon," said Justina softly. I looked at the man; his eyes had a strange, dull look, staring straight before him, and his breath came heavy and regular like a sleeper's.

"Tell me, who was Xarras?" asked Justina, repeating my whispered question.

"Xarras was our captain once," said Yara proudly. "He was very young. He was one of the band, but so brave that when our old leader died we elected Xarras in his place. He was brave, but not prudent; he loved women, and through them our band was scattered."

"Tell me how?" asked Justina.

"Xarras was mad for a woman in Texas; he loved her years; he often went to see her. When she married another man, he was never the same afterward. One day he came to us in great joy. She had written him that her husband and other men were going to Mexico; she told the route they would take. There would be only one or two old women, the rest young wives and two girls. 'Emigrants have no money,' said one of the band. 'But these have,' answered Xarras, and described the leader.

"We knew him, a dashing young fellow who had hunted us when we robbed his father's ranch on the border; for his family owned great properties in Mexico. 'They will have arms and plenty of men,' said another of the band. 'One can buy Mexicans,' said Xarras, 'we must watch for an opportunity to raid the camp. All I want is one woman; the plunder you can have.' 'Why the trouble? The lady must be willing to come since she herself wrote you,' said an objector. 'It is this,' he answered, 'she fears her husband; he loves her madly, he trusts her; if she is stolen bodily, he will believe her innocent and will not kill her.'

"The rest argued; some wanted the other women; then the band divided, and—I went with Xarras.

"We followed their train of waggons for days, often meeting them, two or three of us, on pretence of asking the way or getting tobacco. Xarras never went near, though he directed us. Dios! what a time it took, but one day our spy came to us; the men were hunting; only one on watch, his name Lombardi, and some Mexicans, two of whom were our own men whom we had smuggled in.

"They were camped on the borders of a little stream. It was near sunset when we rode down, seven of us and the captain. We were painted as Indians—we did not wish to be tracked or known. We killed Lombardi, the Mexicans ran away. Caramba! how the women screamed, the captain's lady loudest. Dios! she was a beauty! They were idiots, those women; they all wished to die."

"Where are they now? How did they die?" asked Justina eagerly. I clutched her arm and shook my head. I could not bear that.

"I am weary," answered the man, "I cannot tell you all; they are dead. The captain's lady too. I have heard those emigrants swore an oath to hunt us down and kill us. They succeeded. I and my captain only are left. He is a great lord in Mexico."

"How did they know you were not Indians? One of us tell?" asked Justina; she has no faith in her own people.

"They dared not; it was a woman; too late the captain's lady remembered we had not all the women. One girl had gone for a walk that afternoon, and was missed in the excitement. She, hidden in the trees, saw us, and she knew us all. She identified all but the captain. She never will find him."

"Why didn't the captain help you among the Apachés?" I cried, and the man gasped, moved uneasily, half-waked, then fell forward on the table.

"You broke the spell," cried Justina, "I told you not to speak. See, he is really sleeping now."

I ran past her, out into the air, over the beach like a mad creature, even in my room hiding my head and locking the door. I could not shut the horror out, and all that night, and many more, I saw Antonio's hideous face and a throng of ghastly, murderous men. I hardly dared look Aunt Marg in the face for fear she would read my guilty thoughts, and Justina became to me as grandfather said I was to him, a living conscience.

At last, however, unable to bear my terror alone, I set out to her cottage. There she was, ambling along the beach, just ahead of me, looking very smart for her. She heard me running, turned quickly to see who it was, and dropped from her hand something yellow and shining that rolled along the sand. I picked it up, a gold piece. She took it from me, looking away from my eyes.

"I went to buy Yara medicine."

"Justina," I said severely, "you are lying. Yara said he had not a farthing; if he had you'd have robbed him when he was ill. You couldn't help it."

"I couldn't help it, Chica," she repeated coolly, with that expressive shrug.

She began making passes over his forehead.

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I could not shut the horror out.

"Well, where did you get the money?"

"I found it in the street."

"You never did; Galveston isn't paved with gold. If you don't tell me I will never come to your house again; never be your Chica any more."

"A gentleman gave it to me."

"What for?"

"Caring for Yara."

"Was it Mr. Scott?"

"Yes, Chica, he has been twice to see Yara."

"You awful story-teller," I cried; "Bruce told me to-day John Scott had not got back from up North, where he went with his mother and aunt. You see I have caught you. If you will act the liar with the only being you love and who loves you, we part here, Justina"

I turned away, and she, seeing I meant it, hobbled up to me. "You take the money, Chica; don't be angry with Justina."

"You insult me."

"The man was Colonel Gregory," she hissed, in a frightened whisper. "Chica, if you tell he will kill me; he is a wicked man. Don't you cometo my house and make me do wrong. I will go back to San Antonio; what prayers I have to say, because you have made me sin; and the priest says I must burn for years in purgatory because of lies for you. Never a mass will you have sad for my soul; and when I am dead you will forget me."

"You shall have all the masses I can buy—I love you!" I cried, and hugged her; "and no more trances, dear, nor will I come till Yara is gone. Send him away any time. I hate him; but that was a real true trance, Justina, not one you used to play on the girls."

"It was true, sweet," she said, scuttling away with a queer sly look on her face. I stood there thinking. Why did my Aunt Marg hate the Colonel, and how did Xarras know Katherine, the wife of a man who stood as high as John Scott? What had brought Yara to Galveston, and why did the Colonel visit him?

I turned quickly round and walked toward the town. On the way Dean Gregory rode by. He never raises his hat; only an insolent nod, like a slap in my face. Meeting him spurred me on. I went straight to the market, where I thought I would meet Bruce. It was about his time to be there. Sure enough, he was just driving down the street. I called him to stop and take me in the waggon.

"Mr. Scott told me to come up and get flowers when I wanted them," I explained. He was pleased to have me for company, and as we drove along I said carelessly, "Did you ever see my sister Katherine, Bruce?"

"Yes," he said shortly.

"Was she married to John Scott long before they went to Mexico?"

"Dat ain't none ob yo' affairs," grunted Bruce.

"You used to have such good manners, Bruce, I've heard; they said you were like the doctor, John's father, so polite, but you are cranky enough now."

"Yo' own manners ain't none too good, Miss Vi'let, I tell yo'," he said crossly; "yo' allus askin' foolish questions dat ain't yo' business. I won't tell you nothin'. I gwine to keep my mouf shut."

"Just one question," I said coaxingly. "Wasn't Dean Gregory just a little bit in love with my sister Katherine?"

What Bruce had known in the past of the affairs of those two I never knew, but there must have been something, for he jumped as if he had been shot.

"I declar' Vi'let, yo' mo' debbil in yo' den enny libbin' creetur'," nor would he say another word. I got out of the waggon in sulky silence. In the garden, in a spirit of wantonness, I picked handfuls of roses and crushed them in my arms until my gown was covered with their petals, and my face moist and sweet from their dying fragrance.

I prowled along, then, in the shadiest path, seeing none of the beauty there, hearing neither the soft echoing of the sea nor the tinkling fountain. I only watched a little window under the eaves where I knew Dean Gregory's belongings were stored. When I saw the servants were at dinner, I went softly into the hall, where the door stood ajar, and then, with a guilty look over my shoulder, fled upstairs, then up another flight, and then up a third, short one, to a dim, low room under the roof. In the wilderness of boxes and trunks I burrowed, but not a sign of the past I wanted to read came to me.

There were plenty of curious relics in the box marked D.G.; letters from many ladies that I fancy they would not have liked me to see, faded and simpering photographs, unpaid bills, lots of them, and garments of every style and cut. In despair I gathered up my roses and started away. On the wall hung a faded grey coat; the uniform of the Confederate army. I went to it and searched the pockets. In the breast pocket were two letters postmarked New York and Charleston. I looked at the signatures: "Ever yours, Katherine."

I thrust them in the bosom of my gown and went quietly down the stairs. I had proofs that Katherine was not the angel John Scott thought her. He should fling her in my face no more. The fact that I was aiming to destroy the good name of my sister never occurred to me. I was sure Dean Gregory was Xarras. Had I not heard his mother say he used to be so often in Mexico, in his youth, and how she used to worry about him?

I went softly into the cool dark parlour to think over my store of information, and what I should do with it. The room was darkened with blinds and thick lace curtains, very cool and fragrant with flowers from the garden. It was divided from the front room by heavy portieres, that I blessed afterward. I sank into a chair, my roses still in my arms.

"If I tell all this to John Scott," I thought, "he may murder his own cousin, and there's another horror to haunt me all my days."

At that very moment a voice sent the blood to my face.

Dean Gregory rode by.

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"Show the gentleman in here, Bruce," said John Scott. I heard the sound of footsteps over the soft carpet and the rolling of chairs. I saw through a chink behind the portiere that the visitors were Maestro, white and scared, and two solemn-looking Italians. "This is better than outdoors," said Mr. Scott pleasantly. "Now I assure you I meant no offence in my letter, not the slightest. I will even apologise."

"We came to demand an apology or to seek satisfaction," said one of the solemn men stiffly.

"I don't believe in fighting," said Scott, and I could detect a ring of laughter in his voice; "besides, I am in the wrong. Before I met your friend I thought him an adventurer seeking to impose on the credulity of a young girl; I find my mistake. He meant well, and I am sure that he will pardon me and accept my hand."

I could imagine Maestro gingerly shaking that iron hand, looking as if the whole Italian Government was on his trail.

"When I went to the gentleman's house," continued Mr. Scott, "he evidently distrusted my motives. He shut the door in my face, and informed me, from an upper window, that he would call the police. Truly, I am not a ruffian. You will find us very civil men in this new country, if you only knew us better."

"I seek not ze knowledge, I vil not try ze experiments," cried Maestro; "I depart for ze city what you call Boston."

"I am sorry," said Mr. Scott, "for I hoped that you would continue Miss Lombard's lessons."

"Nevare! ze young mees haf deceived me. I understan' she was reech."

"She will be," continued Scott cheerfully, "much better off than most singers, unless she has a wonderful voice. Bruce, bring some wine." I heard the click of glasses, the popping of champagne corks, and a flow of conversation soon afterward.

"You must not think Miss Lombard deceived you," said Mr. Scott; "she will have a large fortune some day, but her family would never consent to her going on the stage."

"Ze old man, most probable, is vat you say, he does not compr'end, but you, signor, I may spek wif you, I call you my fren," said Maestro thickly. "Mees haf not ze grande voice; she is not great artist; zare are few of zem; she is pretty mees, an if zare was monaire, I will be frank wiz you, my fren, my brodaire, I would go into vat you call a spec, a speculate with mees. Why should I not haf monaire as well as ze milliner, ze merchant; why not ze lessons instead of ze dresses, ze diamonds? It vil do her no harm to think she cantatrice. Diavolo, one must live?"

I sat there in burning indignation; I believe I could have strangled the little wretch. I heard them talk of other things and finally go away. Then, Mr. Scott came back. He stood in the doorway looking at the glasses, then he broke into a laugh. That was beyond human endurance; with my arms full of stolen roses, scattering them as I went, I rushed into the room and confronted him.

"Upon my word," he gasped.

"I heard everything," I cried. "You always make me out a silly thing, and win my friends away. You always come out right, in your self-righteous way, to humiliate me. I won't be good any more—never, never—I will be a very demon."

He laughed and looked at me. "You are beginning well," he said, "yet you came in more like a goddess of the morn, scattering flowers as you went; but your hair is all cobwebs, your face actually positively dirty, Letty. You are doing well in the demon line. In the career there are no frivolities of gown and ribbons, I suppose. Really, I am a brute to tease you. Come here, and let me play father confessor. Why did you not tell me?"

He drew me to the sofa, and held my hand tight to keep me there.

"I suppose you think it is manly to break people's bones," I muttered.

"No, I do not," he answered, "and you know that," but he did not release my hand. "Was it not better to learn the truth, even as you heard it, Letty, than to go on being self-deceived?"

"I would have succeeded," I said swiftly, "and oh, it gave me something to live for. In time I thought I could lift the millstone of gratitude that has hung round my neck all my days and pay you back. I could support Aunt Marg and grandfather when he was too old to work. I would be a great and good woman, and you would not dare to look down on me. I would be more than your equal, for I would have won my fame and money, and you were born to wealth and had good looks, and just fell into all you wanted because you were a man."

"I am glad that you admit I am good looking," he said, smiling.

I stamped my foot. "I hate you! I hate you!" I cried, "and if I told you all I knew, you would not dare smile in that self-righteous way. You would not look me in the face. I am tired of hearing you held up to be so good, so wonderful. When I tell you what I know, and every word is true, you will see why I hate you, and why to me, with all your airs and sermons, you are no better than a criminal, Mr. John Scott!"

The moment those wicked words were out of my mouth I would have given all the world to recall them. "Oh, forgive me," I sobbed, when I saw his face; "in my grief and anger I did not know what I was saying. I do not mean it; on my knees I ask you to forgive me." I sank down on the floor, at his side, hiding my face. "If I could be struck dead I would be glad."

My own handkerchief that I had left at the Hotel Gilbert.

"I wonder," he said, gently looking down on me and stroking my hair, "if death would ever blot out that scene from your memory, my poor little girl. I have wondered always at the odd things you said, the way you shuddered when I touched you." He took his hand away from my head. "On this trip to the North I went to New Orleans, and there—God help us both!—I learnt your sad secret."

He took a tiny packet from his breast-pocket, as I looked at him with wide, wondering eyes. Then, with a sad look into my face, he laid in my lap my own handkerchief, that I had left in the Hotel Gilbert.

(To be continued next week)

To prevent unnecessary labour, and consequent disappointment, to any readers of this paper, who in the past have forwarded original stories for insertion, we would take this opportunity of saying that our arrangements for the provision of matter for "Short Stories" are complete for some time to come.

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THE MAD MOTHER.

THE insane have for me a peculiar attraction. They dwell in a mysterious realm of fantastical dreams, in that impenetrable cloud of madness, where everything they have seen on earth, everything they have loved, everything they have done, comes to them again in imaginary existence untrammelled by all the laws that govern events and rule the human mind.

For them, the impossible no longer exists, the improbable disappears, magic is real, and the supernatural familiar. The previous barriers of common-sense logic and reason break, fall and crumble beneath their freed imaginations, escaping, with fabulous leaps which nothing can arrest, to the limitless land of fancy. They make no efforts to control events, overcome resistances or obstacles; for at their whim they can be princes, emperors or gods, can possess all the riches of the world, all the good things of life, enjoy all pleasures, be always strong and comely, eternally young and ever cherished. They can only be happy here below; for, for them, Reality is dead.

I love to bend over their vagrant reason, as one bends over an abyss in whose depths foams an unknown torrent, come from one knows not where, and bound one knows not whither.

Still the strangest fancies of madmen are in sane and familiar ideas, strange only because no longer enchained by reason.

The capricious source fills us with astonishment merely because we have not seen it spout forth. Nevertheless, the insane always interest me, and I constantly seek them out, irresistibly attracted by that commonplace mystery, madness.

So, one day, while visiting one of their asylums, the doctor who was escorting me said:

"Wait. I want to show you an unusually interesting case," and he opened the door of a cell where a woman, about forty years of age, still beautiful, was seated in an arm-chair, and gazed persistently at her features in a hand-glass.

As soon as she perceived us, she rose, ran to the opposite side of the room, picked up a veil, and, after carefully covering her face, responded to our greeting by a slight movement of her head.

"Well," said the doctor, "how are you this morning?"

She sighed deeply. "Oh, ill—very ill, sir; there are more marks every day."

He replied decisively:

"No, I assure you that there are not. Indeed, you are mistaken."

She leaned towards him to whisper:

"No, I am sure. I counted ten more pit-holes this morning—three on the right cheek, four on the left, and three, too, on my forehead. It is frightful, frightful! I shall no longer dare to see anyone, not even my son—no, not even him! Nothing can be done, I am disfigured for life," and sobbing bitterly she dropped heavily into her chair.

The doctor seated himself near her, and said in a low, consoling voice:

"Come, show them to me. I know they are not serious. With but a slight cauterisation I can efface them all."

She shook her head in denial, but did not speak. He then tried to raise her veil, but she seized it so strongly with both hands that her nails pierced it.

The doctor once more strove to coax and re-assure her:

"Come, you know that I always get them away, those ugly marks—that no one can see them in the least after I have attended to them; but if you will not show them to me, of course I cannot cure you."

She murmured:

"Well, you I do not mind; but I do not know the gentleman who is with you."

"He is also a doctor, who will care for you still better than I."

Then she allowed her face to be uncovered, suffused with blushes from emotion and the shame of being seen. She lowered her eyes, turned her head from side to side to avoid our gaze, and stammered:

"Oh, how I suffer at showing myself like this! Horrible, is it not? Horrible!"

I contemplated her with the utmost astonishment, for not the slightest mark, spot, or scar was visible on her countenance.

She turned to me, her eyes still lowered, and said:

"It was while taking care of my son that I caught this frightful disease, sir. I saved him, but I am disfigured. I gave him my beauty, poor child! Well, I did my duty, and my conscience is at rest. If I suffer, only God knows it."

The doctor had taken from his pocket a small camel's-hair brush.

"Sit still," said he, "and let me take out those spots."

She turned her right cheek, and he began touching it here and there as lightly as though placing small dots of colour. He then treated the left cheek in the same manner, next the chin and forehead, and exclaimed:

"Look, they are all gone, all gone!"

She took up the mirror, contemplated herself fixedly for some moments, with the keenest anxiety, striving, if possible, to discover something; then said with a sigh:

"No, they no longer show much. I thank you infinitely."

The doctor had risen. He bowed to her, showed me out, and following after said, as soon as the door was closed:

"I will tell you that unfortunate woman's cruel history. Her name is Hermet. She was exceedingly beautiful, very coquettish, sincerely beloved and entirely happy. She was one of those women who have nothing in the world but their beauty and the desire to sustain and cherish it to console them. The constant care of her complexion, her hands, her teeth, and each visible charm occupied every hour and all her attention.

"She became a widow with an only son. The child was brought up as are all children of greatly admired society women; nevertheless, she loved him.

"He grew tall and she—old. Did she see the fatal crisis approaching? I cannot tell. Did she, like so many others, look each morning for hours at the skin, once so delicate, transparent, and fresh, now beginning to wrinkle a trifle under the eyes, to change beneath a thousand lines, still imperceptible, but which would grow deeper day by day, and month by month?

"Did she also see increase, slowly but surely, the long forehead lines, endure the torture, the abominable torture, of the small handglass, that one cannot decide to lay down, and yet throws angrily aside to seize upon again and view nearer, still nearer, the calm, odious ravages of approaching old age?

"Did she lock herself into her bedroom ten or twenty times a day, leaving, for no reason, the drawing-room and the conversation of friends, to gaze once more on the work of destruction, to view with despair the slow progress of the ill that no one else seems yet to see, but that she herself sees so clearly? She knows where the ravages are greatest, the bites of time the deepest. And the glass, the little handglass in its graven silver frame, tells her abominable things, for it seems to speak, to smile, to mock at bodily suffering and atrocious mental torment, which she must undergo until the day of her death, which will be that of her deliverance.

"Did she weep, distracted, upon her knees, and pray, pray, pray that one who thus kills human beings, and gives them youth to make age more unbearable, and lends them beauty but to take it quickly back again: did she pray and supplicate Him to do for her what He has never yet done for any—to leave her until death her freshness, grace, and charm? Then, comprehending that she implored in vain the inflexible Unknown who hastens the years, did she beat her brow and wring her hands in an agony of silent despair?

"Doubtless she endured all those tortures, for this is what happened.

"One day—she was then thirty-five years of age—her son, aged fifteen, fell ill.

"He was confined to his bed before anyone could determine the cause of his suffering or its exact nature. A priest, his tutor, watched constantly beside him, while Madame Hermet came morning and evening to see him.

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"She would come in the morning in her dressing-gown, smiling and perfumed, and ask, even before she passed the door:

"'Well, Georges, are you not better?'

"And the big boy, with his face swollen and red from fever, would reply:

"'Yes, mother dear, a little better.'

"She would remain a few moments in his room, look at the vials of medicine with an expression of disgust, then exclaim suddenly: 'Oh, I've forgotten something very important,' and run quickly out.

"At night she would appear in a low-cut bodice, in still more of a hurry, for she was always late, and would have but just time to ask:

"'Well, what did the doctor say?'

"The tutor replied:

"'He has not yet decided, madame.'

"At length, one night, the tutor answered: 'Madame, your son has the small-pox.'

"She uttered a cry of terror and fled.

"When her maid entered her bedroom on the morrow, she smelled a strong odour of burned sugar, and found her mistress in bed, trembling with anguish, and with cheeks pale from want of sleep. Madame Hermet asked, as soon as her blinds were drawn:

"How is Georges?"

"'Oh, not well at all to-day, madame.'

"She rose at noon, ate only an egg and drank a cup of tea, as though she had been ill, then went out and learned of a chemist how to guard against contagion from small-pox.

"She returned at dinner-time loaded down with vials, and went immediately to her room, where she saturated herself and her clothing with disinfectants.

"The tutor awaited her in the dining-room. As soon as she met him, she exclaimed in tones of deepest emotion, 'Well?'

"'Oh, no better. The doctor is very anxious.'

"She began to fret, and could eat nothing whatever.

"On the morrow at daybreak she sent to inquire, and, receiving news no more favourable, passed the entire day in her room, where smoked innumerable small braziers that gave forth pungent odours.

"Her servant also stated that she could be heard moaning all night long.

"A week passed thus, during which she did nothing save take the air an hour or two in the afternoon. She asked for news every hour, and wept bitterly each time it was worse.

"On the eleventh day, in the morning, the tutor, having had himself announced, entered her apartment, his face pale and grave, and, refusing to seat himself, said:

"'Madame, your son is much worse, and asks to see you."

"She fell on her knees and cried:

"'Oh, my God, my God! I shall never dare! Help me, oh, my God!'

"'The doctor has little hope, madame, and Georges is waiting for you!'

"Then he left her.

"Two hours later, as the young man grew weaker and again called for his mother, the tutor went once more to her room, and found her yet upon her knees, still weeping and repeating:

"'I cannot! I cannot! I am too afraid. I cannot!'

"He strove to persuade, to fortify, and urge her; but succeeded only in bringing on an attack of nervous paroxysms of long duration.

"The doctor, having returned towards night, was informed of her cowardice, and declared that he would bring her, willing or not.

"But after having exhausted all arguments, as he took hold of her to carry her to her son, she clung to the door with such obstinate grasp that it was impossible to move her.

"Then, when they had abandoned the struggle, she prostrated herself at the physician's feet, calling herself a wretch, and begging for pardon.

"'But, oh, he will not die!' she screamed. 'Tell me he will not die! Tell him I love him, worship him!'

"The youth was in the agony of death, and, feeling that he had but a few last moments, he implored them to persuade his mother to come and bid him adieu. With the presentiment which the dying often have, he seemed to know and comprehend all that had taken place, and said:

"'If she fears to enter, beg her just to come by the balcony to my window, that I may at least see her, and bid her good-bye in a look, since I must not kiss her.'

"The doctor and the tutor returned once more to that woman.

"'You incur not the slightest risk,' they declared, 'for there will be a window pane between you and him.'

"She consented, covered her head, took up a bottle of smelling-salts, and made three steps upon the balcony, then, suddenly, hiding her face in her hands, she moaned:

"'No, no, I dare not see him—never—I am too ashamed, too afraid! No, I cannot!'

"They tried to drag her, but she clutched the rails in desperation, and groaned so piteously that she attracted the attention of passers-by in the street below.

"And the dying boy still waited, his eyes turned toward that window, for a last look at the sweet face of his dearly-beloved mother.

"He waited long, and night came. Then he turned his face to the wall, and spoke no more.

"When day broke he was dead.

"On the morrow, she was insane."

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THE NEW BURGLAR TRAP AND ITS VICTIM.

In building my house in the suburbs of London I had an eye to comfort, convenience, economy of space and—burglars. I built my burglar trap at the same time that I built the villa. A covered verandah ran along the west side of the house, the roof only twenty inches below the second-storey windows. There are two bedrooms on that side, but a burglar would have imagined that there were three. The third window did not light a bedroom, however, but was the entrance to my trap.

I could not reasonably expect a burglar to climb up the pillar at the north end of the verandah and creep past the first window to the second. The convenience of a burglar must be consulted in planning and building. I had a stout trellis work made and fastened to the centre pillar exactly under the middle window.

I told my wife that it was for a climbing rose, but I deceived her. It was placed there for the sole and single purpose of assisting a burglar to get into the house. A burglar had but to cross a vacant building plot next door, where trees and bushes gave him shelter, drop over a fence and creep a distance of ten feet, and there he was. In planning the house I said to the builder:

"I have seen a dozen burglars in court or prison, but I had no hand in their capture. My strong desire is to capture one myself. I want to take him in the very act. My house must, therefore, contain a burglar trap as well as a drawing-room."

The middle window lighted a room twelve feet long by eight wide, which was provided with chests and drawers as a linen room. On each side was a bed-room, and at the far end a door opened into the hall. The burglar alarm connected with all other windows but this. All other sashes had a patent burglar proof catch, but these had one which a child might open from the outside.

Inside the window, and sliding up and down the casings, as a drawer pulls out, was an iron shutter, which worked by means of a spring. By pressing a knob in my bed-room at the front of the house I could drop this shutter. The walls on either side were of brick, and the inside of the door was covered with heavy sheet iron. It was a floor paved with wooden bricks, and exactly under the window, just where a burglar must put his foot, was a square of flooring so arranged that a pressure of five pounds on it rang an alarm at the head of my bed.

From one of the adjoining rooms was a peephole, and the burglar trap was lighted by electricity, which was turned on and off from the hall. There was one thing more. A gas pipe was run into the room from the hall, and the end left open. The flow of gas could be regulated by a stopcock outside the room.

As I had been to considerable pains and expense in fitting this trap for a burglar, I hoped for an early visit, but for some reason or other the profession seemed to have lost its push and ambition. Weeks and months went by, but no burglar came. Other houses were visited and ransacked, and my nearest neighbour was even shot at by a midnight visitor; but, alas! I was entirely ignored. In this emergency I resorted to stratagem. No, it was not stratagem, but base deception. A reporter called on me to get the particulars of an accident in my neighbourhood and I told him a falsehood about a burglar effecting an entrance to my house. I spoke about my silver plate and jewellery and of the large sum of money I usually kept in the house, and gave him to understand that I was a nervous, timid man, and had no weapons to defend my treasures. The reporter worked up a very readable and seductive article, and, to ease my conscience, I sent him a £5 note in such a manner that he could not possibly trace its source.

Yes, I must say that if I had been in the burglar profession, that article would have filled me with enthusiasm. I hadn't read it half through when I felt convinced that I should receive an early visit. No burglar worthy of the name would go off fishing and leave such an opening as that to go to seed.

Two days later, as I took the train for my three-mile ride home, it so happened that there were but four other passengers in our compartment. Three of them I knew; the fourth was a stranger, and I was bound to give him more than a passing glance. To be frank, he annoyed me. He not only had small feet, but the heel of his right boot was badly overtrodden.

You may think it was queer that I was vexed about the young man's boot-heel, but such was the case. Nothing makes a man look so slouchy as runover heels. They spoil his walk, produce blisters and corns, and keep his temper unnecessarily sharp.

I thought of the young man several times during the evening, and he was in my mind when I went outdoors after breakfast to stroll about and smoke my cigar. I had not to look long before I discovered that he had also been thinking of me. In the fresh earth of a newly-made flower bed were the prints of his heels. I could have identified that heel in China. During the evening he had looked the ground over, passing twice round the house. If not a burglar, then he was a burglar's scout. I couldn't say what he had thought of things, but I rather expected he would take the trouble to push his investigations a little further before he attempted to enter the house.

Therefore, before leaving for the City, I said to the cook:

"Some time to-day a young man will be here to ask about the burglar alarm. Tell him that it is all right except on the linen-room window, and that we don't care about."

When I came home at night I asked if he had been there. He had. He came with some tools tied up in a piece of carpet, and the cook even went out and pointed to the unguarded window. Then I knew that he would visit us that night. As near as I could guess, he would come by the eleven o'clock train, and in that case there was only half an hour before he made his *début*.

I may tell you without conceit that exactly thirty-one minutes after eleven o'clock my burglar trap alarm sounded. Five seconds later I had pressed the knob which let the shutter fall. I had timed my caller to within a minute. My wife was aroused and wanted to know what was going on. While dressing myself I explained matters, but not to her satisfaction. When I left the room, she was enveloped in the bed-clothes and on the verge of hysterics.

I turned the electric light on in the trap and carefully opened the peep-hole.

There stood my young man in the middle of the room, and he was winking and blinking with surprise. In his hand he held a pistol, but it was of no more use than a stick. While I gazed at him he went to the window and examined the shutter and then stepped over and inspected the door. He was as secure as if in a prison cell.

"Well," said I at length, "you did not disappoint me."

He started; then, catching sight of my face, he said, "You expected me, then?"

"I did. What do you think of the arrangement of things?"

"Seems to be a regular trap."

"Just so. Had it put up on purpose to catch a burglar. Let me ask you if you have read that newspaper article the other day?"

"That's just what brought me here. I thought it was a place which only wanted walking into. It was all a put-up job, eh?"

"Advertising always pays," I answered evasively. "I presume you have a pal outside? I am not thoroughly up in the burglary business, but as I understand it they generally go in pairs, and one is left outside on the watch."

"You needn't worry yourself about the man outside!" growled the captive. "Come, now, let me out of this!"

"Why, my dear sir, the man who would capture a burglar and turn him loose within ten minutes would be an idiot. Put down your revolver, and I'll come in and clap the handcuffs on you."

"You show your head in this room, and I'll fill you with lead. Open that door or we'll wipe out the whole family!"

"Will you quietly submit?"

"Never. If you've got me, I've also got you! If I can't get out, you can't get in!"

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"But you forget about the gas. I can fill the room, and asphyxiate you in ten minutes. That's part of the trap, you know."

For answer he raised his pistol, and fired three shots at the peep-hole, but, as it was a wrought-iron plate, pierced with small holes, his bullets were wasted. I turned on the gas, and within a minute he began to cough and move about. As the flow continued, he went over to the window to find a breathing hole, but there was none.

"Will you knock under?" I asked at the peep-hole.

"No!" he shouted, as he lay down on the floor, with his mouth to the crevice under the door.

I descended to the pantry for a bottle of cayenne pepper, and when I had sprinkled a lot of the stuff just outside the door, the burglar had to retire. He was a plucky fellow, and it took twelve minutes to bowl him over. I heard him strangling, and gasping, and moaning, and, after opening the hall window, I threw open the door to the trap.

The increase in my bill that month proved that I gave him 850 feet of gas. He was lying like one dead when I pulled him out in the hall, clapped on the handcuffs, and called to my wife and the cook to help resuscitate him.

We got water and camphor and brandy, and we bathed his head and chafed his hands, and poured stuff down his throat, but it was forty minutes before he came to. While the cook tartly informed me that she was not paid to assist in reviving asphyxiated burglars, my wife was still more ungracious.

She said the idea of trying to restore a dead burglar to life, and thereby give him opportunity to burglar again, just showed what an idiot I was. I had been downstairs after more brandy, and the burglar's eyelids were fluttering, when my wife, who had been bathing his chest, looked up and said:

"Well, you ought to have a medal for your smartness! Your burglar is a woman!"

Stupid that I was not to connect the small hands and feet and other points with a woman, but I hadn't done it. She came to and sat up and stared and blinked at us, and it was a long ten minutes before she realised the situation.

"Isn't this rather out of the line of your sex?" I finally queried, and received no answer.

Well, a woman is a woman, no matter what her offence, and when daylight came I turned the "burglaress" loose. More than that, we gave her a breakfast and her tram fare. I even followed her out to the gate and returned her pistol. Stupid thing for me to do, no doubt, but, you see, I had a burglar trap all baited and ready and could probably catch another without cost or trouble. Everybody lets the first rat go in honour of the new trap, you know.

A BACKWOODS TERROR.

If you are a stranger, and travelling the roads over the mountains and through the woods of northern Pennsylvania, you will find yourself wandering frequently from the way you want to go, and it will be safe for you to ask for information and direction at every backwoods cabin or farmhouse you may come to.

One day I stopped at a rather rickety-looking cabin or house in a small clearing along the headwaters of the Sinnamahoping to get a better understanding of my bearings. A raw-boned, sinewy six-footer, in overalls and shirt, with long, bristly, reddish hair straggling from under an old felt hat, sat on a chopping block at the road-side.

"How do I go to Kelly's camp?" I asked the formidable looking mountaineer.

"You kin go by Wolf Holler, or you can go through Painter Woods, or you kin go by the way o' Fogerty's Mill, whichever way you want to," replied the man in a voice that rasped and rattled.

"Which is the nearest?" I asked.

"Han't much difference," replied the man. "Ever been in Wolf Holler?"

Having left England only six weeks before I admitted unblushingly that I never had.

"Are you much on b'ar?"

No I wasn't; not particularly.

"Mebbe you hadn't better go by way o' Wolf Holler, then," said the six-footer, with an ominous shake of his head. "I s'pose Wolf Holler is the terriblest place for b'ar there is in the hull Sinnymahopin' spread.

"They call it Wolf Holler because it was a ch'ce place for wolfs wunst, but they'm all gone, 'n' I ben tryin' to hev 'em change the name to B'ar Hole.

"I don't reckon they will, but they orter. It hain't pooty nigh safe for a feller th't hain't much on b'ar to go through the Holler, for he's more'n likely to get stopped by a b'ar or two and mebbe hurt.

"I go that way to Kelly's pooty often, just for a change. Whenever I feel limp 'n' don't feel just in the humour to tackle the Painter Woods or Fogerty's Mill, I just take a jaunt through the Holler. It sorter rests a chap, arter he's been to the woods or to Fogerty's to give the Holler a whack. I got away with three—lemme see, a week ago to-day. Yes, it was just a week ago to-day."

"Three what?" I asked.

"B'ar," replied the man nonchalantly.

"Are they as thick as that?" I asked.

"Thick! Thunder an' Mars! they'm jist swarmin'! The fellers over to the camp sends for me on an av'rage o' wunst a month to jog down to the Holler 'n' weed out a parcel o' bruins, 'cause they got too many to be comf'table. Puts me in mind. I jist got word, a little while ago—not more than half-an-hour 'fore you kim along—that the Holler's jammed with b'ar again, 'n' asting me to go down 'n' kinder harvest some of 'em, just to give the teamsters a little confidence ag'in. 'Spose I'll hef to do it t'morrow or next day. I think the Holler's about two mile the nighest way to the camp from here, cap'n."

"Couldn't you make it handy to do your errand at the Hollow to-day, and see me through all right?" I asked.

"Couldn't do it nohow, cap'n," said the man. "My ol' woman's been coaxin' o' me all mornin' to go back on the hill yonder an' knock over a b'ar that's been hangin' roun' for a couple o' days, 'n' a wild cat that stole a couple o' her geese last night th't she 'spectin' to sell to git a new bunnit with. But I says no. To-day's my tired day, 'n' I kill no b'ar nor wild cats for nobody. I don't keer if they carry off all the pigs 'n' geese there is on the clarin', new bunnits or no new bunnits! The old woman's in yonder bellerin' like a calf now, cause her geese is gone. I'd like to accommodate you, cap'n, but I'm tired to-day, 'n' don't calkalate to do nothin' for nobody."

I thought to myself that here must be a cheerful and amiable consort for a woman of even some degree of sensibility, as his wife evidently was. Then I said:

"How about the Panther Woods route?"

"You said you wasn't much on b'ar," replied the man; "mebbe you're conside'ble on wild cats?"

"No more on wild cats than I am on bears."

"Wull," said the bushwhacker, but with a doubting shake of the head, "you mowt git through ol' Painter without any of 'em tacklin' of you, but if you do there'll hef to be a record made of it, for I never knowed anybody to go through yit without havin' to argy with from one to seven wild cats. A good many smarty folks has tried it, 'n' never got the best of the argyment, nuther. There was Jeb Croker, who was one of those chapsth at was allus braggin' that he could lick his

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weight in wild cats. Wull, Jeb he made a bet he'd go through Painter Woods 'n' come out on t'other side without a scratch nor a tear in his clothes.

"Jeb hain't never come out yet 'n' that was ten years ago. It mowt be that he is dodgin' 'n' scroochin 'n' twist'n' around in the woods yit, to keep out o' the way o' the wild cats, so ez to win his bet, but I hev my doubts about it.

"I never went through ol' Painter yit without hevin' to lay out less'n four wild cats, and I s'pose I've had most a baan full o' shirts 'n' overhauls torn to wuthlessness in argyin' with the pesky critters. Most folk goin' to the camp from here'd ruther any time take the Wolf Holler road or the way by Fogerty's Mill than to spend their time goin' through ol' Painter. I hear my ol' woman bellerin' yit over them squawkin' geese. If she don't shut up pooty soon I'll go in and settle her!"

"Well, what kind of a gauntlet does a fellow have to run if he goes by the way of Fogerty's Mill?" I asked this specimen of backwoods conjugal amiability.

"Be you much on the fight?" he asked me.

"Man fight?"

"You call it man fight, but it's more like tiger fight!"

I said I was not anything at all on that kind of fight.

"Then I'll be sorry for you if you go by Fogerty's," said the man. "Didn't you never hear o' Ike Buncher, Sam Slewton, Twister Groot, 'n' Logchain Bill Gibbs?"

"Never."

"Thunder 'n' Mars!" exclaimed the strapping bushwhacker. "Say, cap'n, if I hadn't made up my mind not to raise a finger to do nothin' for nobody to-day, I'd just like to hev you by way of Fogerty's 'n' me go 'long. It'd be fun a hossback fer me.

"B'ar hain't pleasant to tackle if you hain't much on 'em, 'n' wild cats is sassy to argy with, but nuther on 'em hain't above ground yit when you talk o' Logchain Bill Gibbs, Twister Groot, 'n' them fellers.

"If you go the way o' Fogerty's the chances is that the Twister or Logchain Bill or some o' the rest o' them 'll be waitin' for you afore you git there.

"It don't make no difference which one on 'em it is, the first thing you know you'll be turnin' somersets out o' your waggon, 'n' mebbe you'll be hangin' on a tree or doubled up in a fence corner, feelin' as if a cycloon had just passed that way 'n' met you.

"'Fore you could git up and look around you twice, they'd hev your horse an' waggon down to the tavern an' the hull thing divided up an' sold. If none of the boys met you 'fore you got to Fogerty's they'd stop you when you did git there, 'n' you'd hef to git out 'n fight.

"If you was alive arter the fight, they'd let you go on your way afoot if you was able, 'n' if you wasn't able they'd lick you agin because you wasn't.

"Twister Groot gits his name 'cause he twisted a four-inch ches'nut saplin' in two wunst as it stood in the woods, 'n' ever since Bill Gibbs pulled the log chain links out straight ez an axe helve, they've called him Logchain Bill.

"Nothin' ever goes by the way o' Fogerty's that don't git licked from the word 'go,' but there haint none on 'em that fools with me much any more. If you go by the way o' Fogerty's 'n' hev time to notice before they slam belix out' you, you'll see that Logchain Bill hain't got but one eye, 'n' that Twister Groot's nose is split like a tree split by lightning, 'n' that Sam Slewton's lower jaw is three inches out o' plum, 'n' that Ike Buncher hain't got but one ear.

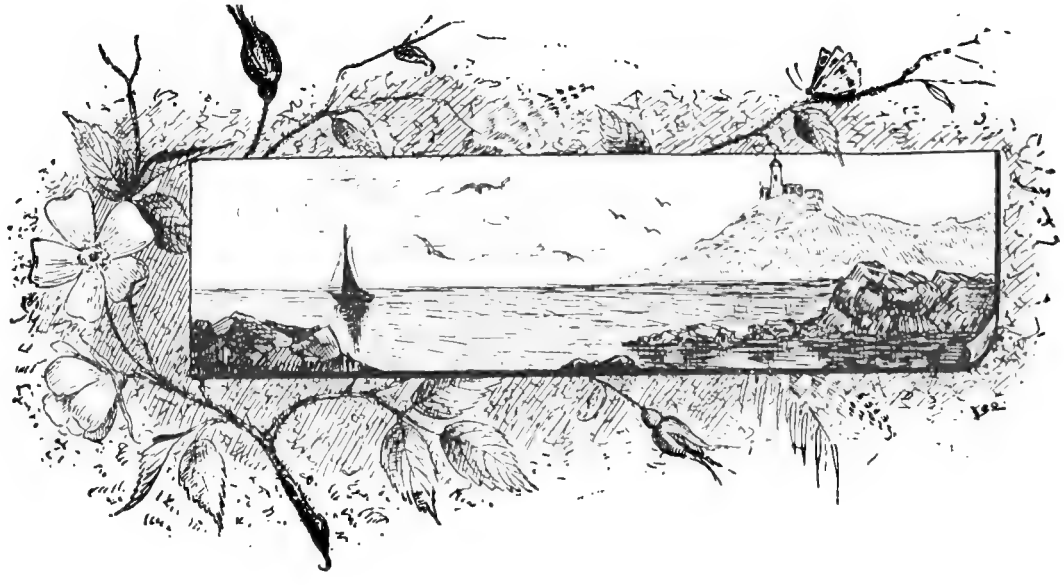
"Them's all little beauty marks that I've give 'em. Cap'n, I've fit the whole passel of 'em half-way from Fogerty's here 'n' back ag'in, 'n' whenever I feel like having some fun with spice in it, I saunter over to Fogerty's 'n' make Logchain Bill or some of 'em stand up 'n' take their medicine.

"Why, wunst—but there's that pesky ol' woman o' mine bellerin' harder'n ever over them geese o' her'n," said the backwoods terror, getting to his feet with surprising alacrity, "an' I'm going in an' settle her right now!"

Just then a little woman, with a hatchet face, looking out from beneath a calico sun-bonnet, appeared at the door. There was no trace of "bellerin'" on her face, but it was full of go. The six-foot bushwhacker looked a trifle sheepish.

"Here, Jack Shapely, you wuthless varmint!" the woman cried. "You mog in here an' peel them taters! An' then you mind the young 'un, for I'm goin' over to the camp with that last trappin' o' coon skins o' yourn!"

The backwoods terror marched into the house as meekly as a lamb, and I drove on, to find Kelly's camp only half a mile distant straight ahead over a very good track.



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A MODEL STORY.

It was a critic in the *Saturday Times* who first drew attention to it. He said:—

"We have nothing but the warmest praise to offer Mr. Edward Stevenson, R.A., on his picture in this year's Academy. It is work such as this which affords the most emphatic denial to the ridiculous sneer of many modern critics that Art has gone to the dogs since the Middle Ages. There is, however, one hint—it is nothing more than a hint—which it seems to us the rising young artist might profit by. Through all his pictures a certain type of feminine beauty predominates unblushingly. Every man of course has a right to his ideal, but Mr. Stevenson, it appears to us, uses his ideal in a way which must jar upon many who would otherwise share our admiration for his works. Saint or sinner, ballet girl or duchess, one and all bear an unmistakable family likeness. The effect to the close observer is disastrous, and although we can hardly call it a blemish, yet it is to be deplored quite as much as mannerisms with an actor. The remedy is simple. We would advise Mr. Stevenson to avail himself of the services of a greater number of models; there must be many good-looking girls who would be only too glad of the opportunity of posing before such an eminent Academician."

Pretty Miss Mildred Cornish read the paragraph through three times. Then she deliberately cut it out with a pair of scissors and put it in her purse.

"A certain type of feminine beauty predominates through all his work, does it?" she said to herself. "I must confess that I had not noticed it myself, but a critic ought to know, and I'm very much obliged for the hint.

"As to the girls who would be only too pleased to pose before him, I have not the least doubt about it. I have not the least doubt that he would be only too pleased to let them—if he were not afraid of me. I expect the critic didn't know that Edward Stevenson was engaged, when he made that remark. I have never heard of such a thing in my life!

"He solemnly declared to me, when I promised to be his wife, that he had never had a model across the threshold of his studio, and that he never would.

"If I thought! Hullo, that's Edward's step—Tuesday? Oh, yes, he's going to take me round to see Jules Murray's studio. I won't mention anything about this to him until afterwards, and then, well——"

When, a moment later, Mr. Stevenson was announced, there was a certain look on the face of pretty Miss Mildred Cornish which would doubtless have caused him some uneasiness had he not been too much taken up with his own thoughts to notice it.

. . . . . .

Jules Murray's studio was one of the prettiest in London. The mantel-piece and a few occasional tables were adorned with beautiful hot-house flowers, the walls were hung with pictures by all the celebrated painters of the day, a rich Persian carpet covered the floor, and heavy curtains of a similar shade hung from brass poles over the windows and door.

Then she deliberately cut it out.

An air of luxury and wealth pervaded the room, in which the faint odour of two capital cigars mingled with the perfume of the flowers and the smell of several canvases on which the paint was still wet.

"There, that's everything, I think," said Jules with a self-satisfied smile. "There's just one little thing I'm doing here, but it's only a study."

He led the way across the room to an easel which stood near the window, and pointed with evident pride to the figure of a graceful girl standing by the side of what would some day be a silent pool.

"It looks rather funny without any head," he said apologetically, "but I have not come across the face yet which quite comes up to my ideal."

"I hope you are going to give the young lady some more clothes," said Miss Cornish, regarding the picture with stern disapproval.

"I hope you are going to give the young lady some more clothes."

Jules Murray glanced at her and laughed good-naturedly.

"They did not wear any superfluous clothing in those days," he said. "Of course, if you——"

"Do you know," interrupted Stevenson, who had been gazing intently at the picture, and had not heard a word of their conversation, "I should never have believed that Madge could have posed so gracefully as that, I——"

Miss Cornish felt her heart give a great thump against her side. Madge! So that was the girl's name!

"I can't imagine how you knew who it was," she said with superb innocence.

"Why, it's exactly like her," Stevenson blurted out. "I could have picked her out among a thousand." Then he stopped suddenly and turned red to the roots of his hair. Until that moment he had not even noticed that there was no head on those fair shoulders, every curve of which he knew so well.

"How do you know it's like her?" persisted Miss Cornish. She smiled, but even the smile could not disguise the intense bitterness of her tone.

"How do I know?" repeated Stevenson slowly. He was trying to gain time. Jules Murray turned away and stuffed a handkerchief into his mouth. "Why—er—because you know I have seen such a number of pictures for which Madge sat as a model. What the dickens are you laughing at, Jules, you ass?"

"Oh, nothing," screamed Jules, who was laughing till the tears ran down his cheeks. Then he noticed the look in Miss Cornish's eyes, and he sobered at once. He saw at a glance how the land lay.

"I beg your pardon," he said, coming to the rescue with considerable presence of mind, "I was only amused at old Stevenson setting up as a connoisseur. If there is one thing more than another about which he knows absolutely nothing, it is lady models. You never sat before a model in your life, did you, Stevenson?"

"You know that as well as I do," said Stevenson shortly. He could see that his friend was on the point of bursting out laughing again, and he could have throttled him with the utmost pleasure.

Miss Cornish looked from one to the other in evident perplexity.

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A moment before she had not the smallest doubt that her lover had deceived her, but Jules' words did more than anything else could have done towards allaying her suspicions.

She held out her hand to her host in her pretty way and thanked him for showing them his pictures.

Then she turned towards the door and Stevenson followed her sheepishly.

Miss Cornish did not refer again to Jules Murray's study of a girl. Only in her heart she vowed she would find out Madge and see whether her face was like the face whose beauty could not be hidden from the sharp eyes of the critic on the staff of the *Saturday Times*.

. . . . . .

Madge was certainly an excellent model. Stevenson often confessed to himself that he could not get on without her. Whenever there was no work to do, when weeks and weeks passed by without seeing her, he found the days grew unbearably long.

She was delightfully pretty. Stevenson had always had a special weakness for a pretty girl. She would pose with a patience which even Job might have envied. Her figure was perfect; her colouring was perfect, and, above all, she was always punctual to a minute—never before or after her time.

There were two sides to her character, and it was perhaps this, above all things, which men admired in her. At times no one could be more queenly or lady-like, and at times she was in the wildest of wild spirits. No one knew better when to be quiet and when to be gay; no one knew better how far to go without going too far.

Now and then Stevenson found himself wondering whether he did not care for her more than for the cold-blooded beauty he had asked to be his wife. They were totally different, of course. There was no question which had the best style of the two. There was no question which his mother would have chosen for him, or any of his relations for the matter of that, if he had taken them into his confidence. But after all, no one else in the world had much to do with the matter. When it came to comparisons the difference was this:

Mildred Cornish was pretty and haughty, rather standoffish and rich. Madge—he did not know her other name, if she had one—was pretty and jolly, hail-fellow-well-met, and decidedly poor.

Madge did not know that he was engaged, and he did not intend that she should until he had quite made up his mind. He would wait for a time and see. And so he began by paying her compliments and ended by falling in love.

Then one day he thought he would like to give her a present, just as a mark of his gratitude. Like most other artists he had very bad taste when it came to matters of everyday life. For the life of him he could not make up his mind what to get.

Mildred he knew had the best taste in the world, but he hardly liked to consult her of all people. It really was a difficult point for a man to decide.

Then he went to a jeweller's.

"This was the bracelet the young lady admired so much last time she was here," the man said. Stevenson remembered directly he saw it. It was a diamond serpent which Mildred had asked him to buy as well as she could without putting it in so many words. He had ignored the hint, for even in those days the novelty of his engagement had begun to wear off, and £200 was a considerable sum to spend on a girl.

However it was just the thing for Madge, and he bought it. It was a mean thing to do, but, after all, Mildred would never know.

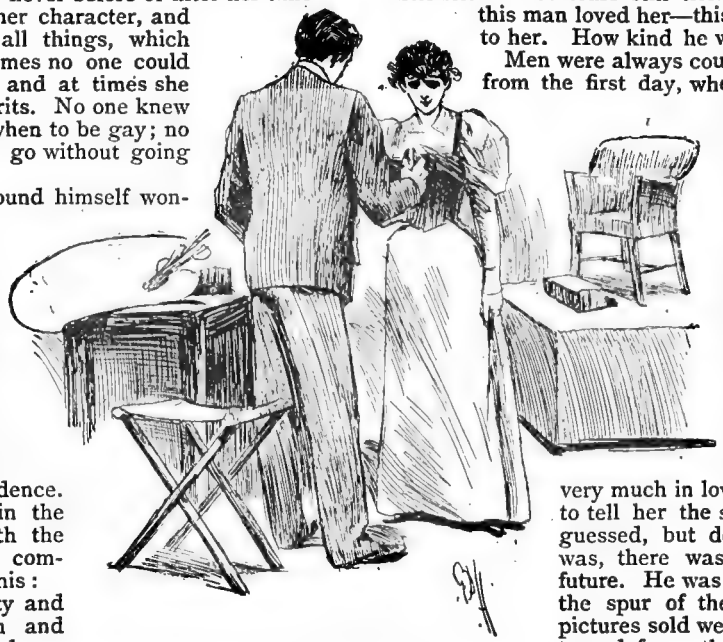
He gave it to Madge the next afternoon after her sitting. The poor girl was half wild with delight. It was the only piece of jewelry she had ever had in her life except the brooch of priceless value to her which she always wore. It was the only relic she had of her mother—the mother she had never known.

Tears of gratitude sprang to her eyes and sobs choked the words of utterance which surged to her lips.

"I am awfully glad you like it," said Stevenson stupidly. He took half a step forward, as if he must kiss away those tears, and then turned to his easel again with a sigh. He would be loyal to Mildred, whatever happened, until his mind was made up once and for all. Besides, there were several creditors, whose names entered his mind just at that moment.

Madge thanked him again and again. She hardly knew what to say, but her smiles, veiled though they were in tears, were more eloquent than any words. Then she turned towards the little dressing-room and began taking off her long flowing draperies, and putting on her articles of every-day apparel.

She felt the hot tears still trickling down her cheeks. So this man loved her—this man who was all the world to her. How kind he was!



He gave it to Madge the next afternoon.

Men were always courteous to her; but Stevenson from the first day, when she had timidly knocked at the studio door, had treated her to all the respect of a sister. No one before had ever ventured to give her a present. She would not have accepted it from anyone else, but from the man whom she loved—yes, who loved her, if she could read aright the sweet language of the eye—how could she refuse a present from him?

As for Stevenson, he stood before his canvas his eyes fixed on the door through which Madge had disappeared. He was certainly very much in love with this girl. He longed to tell her the secret which she had already guessed, but desperately in love though he was, there was still some thought for the future. He was not a man to do anything on the spur of the moment. Perhaps, if his pictures sold well at the Academy—his eyes turned from the door to the brooch which he held in his hand. She had taken it off to show him, and he had forgotten to give it back.

He looked at it for a moment, and then he laid it down reverently on the top of the little red leather case which contained his present.

At that moment he heard a step on the stairs, and the rustle of a lady's skirt.

"Surely, Thomas can't be such an idiot as to show anyone up here like this," he thought to himself, but before he had time to utter a note of warning to Madge, Mildred Cornish stood at his side.

He threw down his brushes and palette, and laughingly held out his hands, which were covered with paint.

"This is an unexpected pleasure," he said. He confessed afterwards that if he had only had a revolver in hand at that moment he would have committed suicide or murder on the spot.

"I hope I am not disturbing you"—this with a suspicious look round the room. "Thomas wanted to show me up in solemn state, but I ran past him, and here I am."

"Yes, here you are," repeated Stevenson gloomily. He felt he must say something, but his tongue was tied, and Madge was listening on the other side of the partition, and the partition was thin. "I'm afraid I haven't got anything

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new to show you," he said. "You must come again another day when some of my pictures have come back from Paris."

"Yes," said Miss Cornish, with another suspicious look round, "I particularly want to compare some of your pictures together."

At that moment Stevenson distinctly heard the rustle of a skirt in the next room. His face turned an ashen grey, and he dared not look at Mildred. Somehow or other he must find some excuse for getting her out of the room. But how?

Miss Cornish was standing in front of his picture. "Is this Madge too?" she asked, turning to him, and pointing with the end of her parasol at the figure of a beautiful girl leaning against the pillar of an ancient temple.

The blood leapt to Stevenson's face and he bent over a box of colours.

"No," he said, hardly above a whisper; "it's much too pretty for her."

Someone dropped a boot in the other room, and he started as if he had been shot. He fancied he heard something like a sob. He looked at Mildred, but apparently she had not heard. In another minute Madge would be dressed and then——

"I thought this girl Madge was very pretty. Is she?"

"It's a matter of taste entirely."

"Do *you* think she is pretty?"

"Yes—in her way you know."

"You know her then?"

Stevenson caught his under lip savagely in his teeth.

"I have seen her if that's what you mean."

"Have you ever painted her?"

"*Mildred!*"

"What?"

"You know what I have promised you—you know——"

"Know what?"

"You know that for your sake I have imperilled my prospects by denying myself the advantages of drawing from life."

His voice was so low that it was almost inaudible.

Mildred took her purse from her pocket and drew out a crumpled paragraph.

"Do you see what the critic in the *Saturday Times* says?"

Stevenson took the little scrap of paper, glanced through it quickly, and then handed it back to her with a little shrug.

"Yes, I have seen that," he said. "What about it?"

"Oh, nothing. But it's rather strange that there should always be a certain type of feminine beauty predominating through all your pictures."

"Strange," he repeated, as if he only half understood her meaning. Then he seized her hands in his and looked down into her beautiful eyes with a depth of passion which might have been prompted either by love or by hate.

"Strange," he said again. "Mildred, what do you mean? Strange! Strange! that you should be my one ideal. Strange! that you should be the only woman whose beauty lingers in my mind. Strange! that I should be able to paint no other face but yours. Oh, Mildred, how little do you understand——"

She shrunk back half frightened at his vehemence.

"Is it *my* beauty which predominates in all these pictures," she asked, her eyes wide open in astonishment and the hot tears springing to her eyes. "Oh, Edward, how can you forgive me——"

He took her in his arms and soothed her. If she had hysterics all would be up. He must get her out of the room.

He covered her face with kisses, and then gently removed her arms which were entwined round his neck.

A sudden sound on the other side of the partition made them both start.

"Who is that?" Mildred cried, frightened at the thought of someone coming in and discovering her in tears.

Stevenson hesitated for a minute.

His collar was choking him and he put his hand up and crumpled it.

"It's—it's the man who is going to be my model for Adam in the Garden of Eden," he said with a sudden inspiration. "Perhaps, dear, you had better go. He might be embarrassed if he found I had visitors. Unfortunately I—I forgot to supply him even with the proverbial fig leaf."

The girl held out her hand with sudden haste, and was evidently about to beat a precipitate retreat.

Stevenson drew a long breath of relief.

If only she would go, all might be well. As Madge had not appeared, it was just within the bounds of possibility that she had heard nothing.

At that moment, by some unlucky chance, his eyes fell on the tell-tale brooch and the little morocco case. Instinctively he snatched them up and tried to hide them in his hand.

The two went out of the room together.

The girl saw the movement and mistook his purpose.

"Oh, Edward, is that for me? This is heaping coals of fire on my head."

She held out her hands. He hesitated for one fatal moment, and then gave them to her.

"I thought you would like it," he said.

She opened the case and her eyes feasted on the glistening diamonds she had longed for. She hardly looked at the brooch. It was a plain little golden arrow with a centre of pearls.

"I don't know whether you would care for the brooch," Stevenson said. He was half-frightened at his own voice. "It is an old family heirloom."

She hardly raised her eyes from the bracelet.

"What a funny little thing," she said. "Of course I shall like it."

"Chuck it away if you don't. Perhaps it is hardly worthy of you." Stevenson realised that he could easily replace the bracelet—this little brooch never.

There was a sob behind him. He turned round and found himself face to face with Madge.

"Hullo, Madge, you here?" he said with a rattle in his throat. "May I introduce you to my future wife, Miss Cornish?"

Miss Cornish held out her hand. Her face was white as death. She seemed for the moment unable to decide how to act. At length she bent towards Madge, and whispered in soft but firm words, which were uttered only by a supreme effort on her part.

"Come, Madge."

The girl stared at her for a moment with a wild look in her eyes.

Then she threw her arms impulsively round the other's neck and the two went out of the room together and left the artist standing there.

. . . . .

When a notice of Miss Mildred Cornish's marriage appeared in the papers some twelve months later, the bridegroom's name was not Stevenson, and as for Madge she is not married yet, and I think never will be.

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THE FOUR PINS.

THE Count Bielski, a nobleman of Poland, was a very ambitious man. His public utterances had displeased the government. He was arrested, condemned to imprisonment for life, and confined in a dungeon many feet underground.

He had no light, and never could tell when it was day or night. He had no one to speak to, for no one was allowed to see him except the keeper of the prison, and he was not permitted to speak to the prisoner. He had no work of any sort to perform.

Days, weeks, months passed on, and he was still in his dungeon. He was never brought to trial, and the unfortunate man was most miserable. He thought he would lose his senses, for his reason began to give way.

Feeling all over his blouse one day he found four pins, and he actually wept for joy.

Yet what could they be to him?

He took them from his blouse and threw them on the floor of his dungeon, and then he went down on his hands and knees and felt all over the floor until he found them.

This he continued to do day after day, week after week, month after month, until the months rolled into years. But they were no longer weary years.

He would defeat the purpose of his jailors, who fondly hoped to make him insane.

He would live now until he became an aged man, cheered by the companionship of his four pins. And then, when he had become too old to move about his narrow dungeon, he would be content to lie down with his four silent friends and die.

In his dreams these pins would often assume familiar shapes. Their heads would take the likeness of his friends and his relations.

They would talk and laugh with him. How happy these dream moments were to the condemned!

There was his dear old mother's face. How she beamed upon him!

And there was his beloved wife and his two rosy-cheeked children—they kissed their chubby hands to their father!

His heart seemed bursting with a new strange joy. He was lost for a time to the sorrow of his condition. He was living a new life in the new world these four common pins had opened before him.

One night he had a fearful dream. He dreamed he had lost his pins. Oh, horror of horrors!

The perspiration broke out in great drops upon his face, arms, and breast.

Thus he found himself, when, with a hoarse cry, he awoke.

He realised quickly that it was only a dream. His beloved companions were found in their accustomed place. What a sense of relief now filled his heart as he again betook himself to slumber!

Ten years had passed, and the prisoner and his pins were inseparable. His keeper, who never yet had spoken to him, was now regarded with a new interest. He feared that this man—hated as one of his oppressors—had discovered his occupation, and that he would endeavour to deprive him of this solace.

Carefully now he guarded his precious pins so that no one should see them, those pins more precious to him in his sorrow than all the wealth of the world could be.

One day he lost all his pins. He had scattered them, he thought, as before, but now they eluded his grasp. He carefully felt over every inch of the floor of his dungeon. Again and again he repeated his search until he grew weary of the task, but not one pin could he find.

As he lay angry and despairing on the stone floor, he was aroused by the noise of the keeper removing the chains and bolts from the door.

Presently he entered, bearing with him the prisoner's scant supply of bread and water. By the dim light of the torch which he carried the prisoner fancied he could discern a mocking smile upon his face.

He had stolen his pins.

He was now rejoicing at his discomfiture. He must have discovered them while the prisoner slept.

Hate now filled the soul of the condemned.

His occupation had been stolen from him, but a new thought at once engaged his mind, diffusing through him a kind of mad joy.

He would devise a means of torture to kill his keeper. He knew that this man—the satellite of an offensive government—despised him.

He would be revenged.

For a long time he gloated over his contemplated plan. How long he knew not.

Then suddenly a light shone before him through the bars of his cell.

It came from the torch borne by the keeper, who had returned. Placing his torch in a crevice in the wall, he walked to the opposite corner of the dungeon from that in which the prisoner crouched, and turning his back toward him began to fasten a chain to the wall.

Ha! he was then to be chained to the wall; his blood boiled at this new indignity.

He wished to attack the keeper at once, but he had no weapon.

His eyes fell upon his hands. They were long and sinewy. He had once been a strong man, but long confinement and lack of nourishment had weakened him.

The keeper was undoubtedly a strong man. All this while he remained with his back to the prisoner.

It was plain he regarded him with contempt and did not fear an attack. He even hummed a fragment of an insulting song as he stood in his strength and consciousness of freedom near the door.

Cautiously, slowly—like a cat approaching a mouse—the condemned moves upon his victim.

Rage lends him strength.

With one bound he is on the keeper's shoulders. His long, bony hands meet like a vice upon his throat.

Then a terrible struggle begins—these two, keeper and prisoner, in that prison cell.

The keeper tries to shake him off. He is a strong man, but he feels he has met his match.

Then the keeper beats him fiercely upon the head and face with a bolt of iron. The blood flows down his face, but he does not relax his hold.

They roll upon the ground—the condemned uppermost. The keeper has managed to secure his dagger. He stabs the prisoner once in the breast.

Then the dagger falls from his hand; his eyes and tongue protrude, his face is a mixture of purple and red—blood trickles from his nostrils. He is dead.

With a maniacal cry of delight, the prisoner staggers to his feet, blood streaming down his breast and head, over his rough prison clothes.

He attempts to reach the door, but his strength fails him completely. He is mortally hurt.

With a scream he falls lifeless across the threshold, striking his head with awful force upon the hard stone floor of the cell.

But what of the pins?

The prisoner had been in the habit, before lying down to sleep, of fastening the four pins in the left cuff of his blouse, as he so often did before.

The fear of detection so operated on his mind that one night, in a fit of somnambulism, he had put the pins side by side in the edge of the garment, and there they were afterwards found and commented upon by the authorities of the prison.

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